GREEN SPACES/ SAFER PLACES

A Forum on Planning Safer Parks for Women

City of Toronto
Planning & Development
Department

Robert E. Millward
Commissioner

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A Report on the Proceedings of

GREEN SPACES/ SAFER PLACES

A Forum on Planning Safer Parks for Women

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For:
The City of Toronto
Planning and Development and
Parks and Recreation Departments,

in conjunction with
the Canadian Urban Institute and
the City of Toronto Safe City Committee.

$5.

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Forward and Acknowledgements

This report presents the proceedings of the Green Spaces/Safer Places forum held on September 14, 1990. The report summarizes the presentations, workshops and recommendations made by forum participants during the day. The recommendations contained in this report form a pool of ideas for consideration by the various agencies involved in the planning and design of City parks. The report is also intended as an independent commentary on the achievements and limitations of this forum on making parks safer places for all Torontonians, by making them safer for women.

The purpose of the forum, Green Spaces/Safer Places, was to provide an opportunity for landscape architects, park planners, user groups and other interested citizens to exchange information on the issues of safety, with a focus on open space and park planning case studies. It is acknowledged that the City of Toronto Departments of Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development actively consider safety for women and other vulnerable communities in their planning and development process and that many of the ideas presented in the forum are considered and implemented to some degree in this process. The participation of these Departments in the forum does not constitute blanket endorsement of all recommendations presented. Further study is required to determine the overall usefulness and feasibility of their implementation. The forum was not considered as the final word on the subject of making parks safer.

The funding for this report was provided by the Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Development Department, Canadian Urban Institute and Safe City Committee. The report was designed, typeset and printed by the Planning and Development Department.

The Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, Ontario Association of Architects, Canadian Urban Institute, and Women Plan Toronto assisted in publicizing the forum by making their mailing lists available. The Communications Division of the City Clerk's Department designed the flyer for the forum. On behalf of the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women (METRAC), Connie Guberman organized and coordinated the High Park walkabout held on September 13, 1990.

The idea to organize this forum originated with the members of the Safe City Committee's Planning Policy Subcommittee: Colleen Weir, Gerda Wekerle, Reggie Modlich, Connie Guberman, and Ali Grant. They also provided guidance on the format of the day. Candace Zboch, Christine Sharman, and Jerry Belan of the Parks and Recreation Department and Sue McTavish of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects pro-

vided advice and assistance as the forum was being organized. Irene Krajicek put incredible time and effort into organizing this forum during her summer employment with the Planning and Development Department. The Safe City Committee, Carolyn Whitzman, Facilitator of the Safe City Committee, and Laurel Rothman, Manager of Community Services Policy in the Planning and Development Department, oversaw the planning and promotion of the event.

This report is being distributed to interested individuals, groups, and agencies. Written comments on the report and its recommendations should be addressed to the Safe City Committee, 18th Floor, East Tower, Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2. For more copies of the report, please contact Catherine Leitch, Committee Assistant for the Safe City Committee at 392-0403 or write to the above address.

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Introduction

At the root of women's safety concerns is the real threat of sexual assault. One in four women is sexually assaulted at some point during her life[1]. One third to one half of sexual assaults occur in public spaces[2]. Women's experience with sexual violence or living under the threat of it means they can make an important contribution to the debate on what makes public spaces feel unsafe and what can be done to improve them. Sensitive and effective design aimed at making parks safer can only be achieved when women's own knowledge and experiences are used as a starting point in investigating design solutions. We move closer to the goal of creating a city which is safe for all residents when women's concerns about public spaces are addressed.

Activism by grassroots women's groups has led to a heightened awareness among politicians and policymakers about violence against women. This awareness has resulted in some bold initiatives in the City of Toronto. In September 1988, Toronto City Council adopted the report *The Safe City: Municipal Strategies for Preventing Public Violence Against Women*. The Safe City Committee was formed to involve politicians and representatives of community groups in monitoring the implementation of the report's recommendations. The Committee currently has 21 members, including six Council members and 15 representatives of community organizations concerned about violence against women.

The *Safe City Report* defines public violence against women as follows:

> Public violence against women not only refers to those acts which may end up in the police statistics, including murder, sexual assault, robbery, etc. It also refers to subtle acts of violence which are much more difficult to monitor and prevent, such as sexual and racial harassment.[3]

The 37 recommendations in the Safe City report are concrete ways of fighting public violence against women through urban design and planning, transit, policing, and community participation in crime prevention. The Committee is now involved in formulating policy to address more fundamental causes of all forms of violence against women.

The third recommendation of the *Safe City Report* states:

> That City Council authorize a review of City policy on landscaping from the perspective of enhancing public safety.[4]

The Safe City Committee developed the forum **Green Spaces/Safer Places** in response to this recommendation and as a way to promote dialogue about how to make parks safer for women. On September 14, 1990, over 150 people attended this forum at the St. Lawrence Town Hall in Toronto.

Goals and Content of the Forum

The goals of the forum were:

- to promote discussion and networking between professionals and members of the community;
- to raise awareness about the relationship between park design and management and women's safety; and
- to recommend to the City of Toronto future policy directions in formulating and implementing strategies to make parks safer places for women.

By focusing on women's safety, the forum was intended to foster discussion and ideas about how parks can be made safer for women and what will increase women's sense of security in open public spaces. This focus was not meant to diminish or undermine the concerns of other groups of park users, but rather was intended to begin the task of identifying and responding to specific concerns of various groups of park users. Solutions found to address women's safety needs in parks will improve these spaces for other groups of users.

The forum brought together architects, planners, and community people concerned about park safety. The emphasis was not only on bringing together concerned individuals in the City of Toronto, but also people from other areas who may be looking for guidance on how to handle safety and park planning issues in their own communities. The forum was divided into five components:

(1) a panel discussion on why safety and security in parks and landscaped open space is an issue;

(2) a keynote address on park policy in New York City;

(3) presentations of two case studies on integrating women's safety concerns into park planning;

(4) workshops to involve everyone present at the forum in putting forth action ideas for improving park safety in the City of Toronto; and

(5) closing remarks.

Question and answer periods were held after the panel discussion, keynote address and the presentation of the case studies to give members of the audience an opportunity to ask questions of the speakers.

In conjunction with the forum, the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), held a walkabout in High Park on the evening prior to the forum to raise awareness about safety audits and to provide concrete examples of safety-related considerations in park design.

A major limitation of the forum was the lack of policy direction relating to the specific concerns of various groups of women, such as parenting women, women of colour, disabled women, immigrant women, native women, lesbian women, older women, homeless women and teenage women. The forum was only a first step in identifying some of the concerns which might generally be shared by women and some action ideas to address those concerns.

Purpose and Structure of the Report

This report provides an overview of the **Green Spaces/Safer Places** forum. Through paraphrasing and summary, the report highlights the main ideas presented by panellists and speakers, as well as the suggestions which emerged in the afternoon workshops. The report presents the recommendations for the City of Toronto which stem from this forum.

The report is divided into sections which correspond with the components of the forum. Section 1 looks at the remarks of the four panellists; Section 2 is devoted to the keynote address; and Section 3 focuses on the case studies of High Park and Mount Royal. Each of the above sections concludes with a summary of the questions and comments from the floor. The main ideas from the workshops are synthesized in Section 4, and the concluding speech is summarized in Section 5. Concluding remarks and a summary of the recommendations which emerged are presented in Section 6.

1

Panel Discussion

Why Safety and Security in Parks and Landscaped Open Space is an Issue

The panel discussion was introduced by Barbara Hall, Chair, Safe City Committee and City of Toronto Councillor, Ward 7. It was moderated by Howard Levine, City of Toronto Councillor, Ward 14.

Panellists:

Gerda R. Wekerle is a Professor with the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. She has published widely on women and environments, including studies of land use, transportation, housing and security as these relate to women's changing needs and lives. She is a member of the Planning Policy Subcommittee of the Safe City Committee of the City of Toronto.

Jo-Anne Egan is a planner with the Policy Development Division of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department. Formerly she worked as a planner in the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department, the Town of East Gwillimbury, and the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department.

Jennifer Khong is the Multicultural Consultant for City Plan '91. She is involved in community outreach work to seek input from diverse communities into the City of Toronto's 1991 Official Plan review process. Her background is in social work.

Kim Storey is an architect and partner with the firm Brown and Storey Architects of Toronto. She currently holds the position of Vice Chairman of the Toronto Society of Architects. For several months, her firm has been working on an Open Space Study for downtown Toronto. Their aim is to formulate a means to classify open space and make recommendations about creating and designing open space.

Gerda Wekerle Planning Safer Parks for Women: Developing a new agenda for open space policy in the City of Toronto

> *"The real issue is that Toronto residents, and particularly women residents of the city, are more concerned about security in parks than they used to be. And increasingly they are demanding the right of access to all the public services of the city, including parks, without having to fear for their lives."*

Arguing that park security is now a priority on the public agenda, Gerda Wekerle outlined how, over the past eight years, municipal agencies and community groups helped make park security a public issue in Toronto. A critical event was the formation in 1982 of the Metro Task Force on Public Violence against Women and Children, which was prompted by several violent attacks on women. A Planning and Urban Design subcommittee was formed which subsequently formulated recommendations for evaluating security in open public spaces and proposed municipal actions to make public spaces safer.

The Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) was established in 1984 by Metro Council to implement the Task Force recommendations. METRAC has undertaken research into where and why women feel unsafe; how women use High Park and their perception of security in the park; and how security in subway stations can be improved through design. METRAC has also developed a checklist for groups wanting to conduct safety audits in their own communities.

The Safe City Committee was established to implement the recommendations in *The Safe City Report: Municipal Strategies for Preventing Violence Against Women*, adopted by Toronto City Council in 1988. One of the tasks of the Committee is to work closely with the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department to monitor how security issues are dealt with in parks policy.

Grassroots women's groups, such as "Women Plan Toronto", the "High Park Women's Action Committee", and the "Riverdale Women's Action Committee" have also helped to make park security a public issue. These groups have conducted detailed safety audits of some local parks and recorded women's experiences as users of open public space and their suggestions for improving security.

Wekerle noted that the women's groups and municipal agencies often have worked together. Grassroots groups have fed their findings and ideas into municipal agencies

through METRAC and the Safe City Committee. These contributions, based on actual experiences with parks, suggest that user input into park planning can be obtained without large scale quantitative surveys.

Wekerle concluded by noting how demographic changes are reinforcing the need for landscape architects and park professionals to pay greater attention to women's security needs in the design and operation of parks. In particular, more single women, elderly women, and single parents are using parks; and working women wish to use park services at different times of the day than in the past.

Jo-anne Egan Patterns of Daily Use in Some Downtown Parks

> *"Residents are the experts in the user patterns of their local parks. Through their daily observation of park life they know these spaces intimately. Planners must learn how to tap into this local knowledge for the benefit of everyone."*

While employed by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department, Jo-Anne Egan co-authored two major research projects: *A Comparison of Five Inner City Parks: Implications for Planning (FICP)* and *A User Approach to Planning in Allan Gardens*. She highlighted some of her findings about patterns of daily park use, including the social activities she observed occurring at Allan Gardens.

The objectives of the FICP study were to (1) develop qualitative data collection methods; (2) analyse patterns of user behaviour and perceptions; (3) evaluate site characteristics; and (4) identify factors which appear to contribute to successful park life. From a public safety perspective, the study found that well used and successful parks were characterized by:

- a mix of land uses in the surrounding area which generates potential users throughout the day;
- a strong park identity and easily recognized and distinctive features;
- visible and well-marked entrances and exits;
- public streets which surround and penetrate the space;
- the absence of isolated pockets of space;
- equipment and layout which are appropriate to users;

- a minimum of vandalism;
- a clear distinction between public and private realms;
- a unique attraction in the park or adjacent land use which draws users;
- bonds with local neighbourhood (noticeable for example through the staging of local events); and
- a high maintenance level which indicates park staff and local citizens care about the space.

Egan noted that signs of vandalism, maintenance levels, and neighbourhood pride and "ownership" of a park strongly affect the perception of safety.

In Allan Gardens, a downtown park with a reputation as an unsafe and potentially dangerous place, a complex web of social relations was observed. The park has diverse groups of users who were found to co-exist in the park. Gay men use the park at night to meet and socialize. Homeless people use the park as a living space both during the day and night. Religious groups conduct sermons in the park and try to "save souls". The park functions as a classroom for a literacy program. For agencies trying to help youth return home after living on the streets, the park is seen as a tempting place to resume old habits. This intensity and diversity of use inevitably means social tension and occasional violence will occur, "often as a result of the mixing of prolonged frustration and boredom with liberal doses of alcohol or other stimulants".

Egan cautioned, however, against the common reaction of city officials, the police, and community groups to these tensions: increased lighting, the cutting back of shrubs, and increased police patrol. She argued that public places are generally safer if they are populated and used both day and night. Places where public amenities such as benches, telephones, food service or entertainment have been removed or chained to the spot are sterile and repel users. They can turn into areas which harbour undesirable activity.

The study of Allan Gardens not only demonstrated the complexity of park life, but also how sensitive changes and additions to a park's amenities and landscape can help reduce or eliminate conflict between user groups. In depth user studies such as those prepared for Allan Gardens provide useful background information for park rehabilitation projects. Egan also called for greater community involvement in designing and planning parks and open space, emphasizing the need for more creative and informal ways for planners to tap into a community's own knowledge of their open spaces. A process known as co-design, which involves artists working with members of a community to visually communicate their aspirations to design professionals, should be explored. Finally, a commitment to post-occupancy evaluation at regular intervals would

send a signal that the park redevelopment process is ongoing, and does not just end when construction is completed.

Jennifer Khong Findings of the Community Users Survey[5]

> *"The results of this survey showed that the fear of vagrants' harassment and lack of quality facilities are two major concerns [about parks]. On one hand, there is expectation on the designated authority such as the police and municipal government to solve these issues. On the other hand, the respondents do offer constructive and proactive suggestions."*

Jennifer Khong presented the findings of her study of park users' concerns and ideas about safety. Her study included a select number of face to face interviews with park users, conducted in English, Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish. This study was undertaken in preparation for Khong's presentation at the forum.

This survey questioned users about what parks they regularly use, the time of day they use parks, the role of parks in their lives and the lives of their families, and what parks should consist of. The users also were asked what they liked and disliked about parks. Greenery/wildlife, children's playground, open space, and quiet place for relaxation were most often cited as what people liked in parks. Dislikes included: vagrants; lack and/or quality of seating and lighting; secluded areas or the inability to see what is going on; and insufficient facilities such as drinking fountains and recycling bins.

When asked "Do you feel safe?", 59 percent of female park users said no, as did 69 percent of the seniors and 62 percent of the children surveyed. Of those who reported feeling unsafe, 19 percent feel unsafe in the morning and 36 percent feel unsafe in the evening. The reasons cited for feeling unsafe included vagrants, poor lighting, and the secluded nature of parks. In contrast, good lighting and having lots of people around were noted as factors which help make users feel safer. The top three suggestions for improving safety in the parks were improved supervision and policing, better park maintenance, and better lighting.

This community consultation revealed that members of the public very much want to be involved in solving problems associated with parks. A working group in one community has formed to look at what recreational and cultural activities could take place in parks in the evenings when the space is underused. The idea of having restaurants or cafes in parks as in European cities was suggested. Parents could sit and have a coffee while

keeping an eye on their children playing in the playground several feet away. Khong's study also revealed that certain user groups have found their own way to resolve issues around safety. Chinese seniors in one park, for example, are not concerned about safety because they only go to the park when they know their friends will be there.

In conclusion, Khong noted the benefits of working with community and neighbourhood centres in attempts to reach out to park users. She found this approach to be effective in reaching users who are often not heard from or consulted with. Further, her approach was neither expensive nor overly time-consuming. Community workers can bridge the gap between their clients and service providers. Personal contact and making the survey available in various languages contributed to Khong's ability to reach groups who in the past have been excluded from decision-making processes. This community consultation stimulated interest in the issues and increased public awareness and community involvement.

Kim Storey Challenging Conventional Concepts of Open Space and Safety Measures

> *"Public open space in the city must consider its users ... and acknowledge the reality that public space in the city is a gathering space, not an isolation chamber."*

In developing a classification of open spaces in the downtown core, Kim Storey has distinguished between numerous different types of open space, ranging from forecourts of buildings and squares to regional parks. Early in this work, safety measures were viewed as one element of public space design. As her work progressed, however, a theory of open space emerged in which safety is basic principle. Storey focused on (1) how safety is linked to the conventional understanding of open space in the city; (2) the need to consider safety as part of an integrated vision of open space; (3) the need to test ideas about safety in a series of designs for different open spaces.

Storey raised the concept of "green space", which grew out of 19th century garden planning ideas in Europe and was intended as "a place of calm and refuge, a retreat from the dangers and stress of the city." This ideal means individuals are separated from the rest of the city, and placed in dangerous isolation. This one approach to open space was spread throughout the city and became a design solution which does not change or accept changing uses. Storey argued for an approach to public space which takes the users into consideration and recognizes that open space is gathering space.

In her remarks, Storey opposed the view that safety measures are one "layer of technical functions" alongside lighting, paving, drainage, tree types, and maintenance. Safety measures cannot be limited to minimum requirements for lighting levels. Instead, every aspect of design needs to be integrated with a notion of a safe place. Design is also site specific; no single rule, guideline, or ideal provides a solution for every situation.

Her final point stressed the need to apply new ideas about safety to designs in order to fully discuss and understand their value. Specific ideas and designs then need to be implemented at specific sites. Storey proposed that three sites be tested in the city, and that these sites be looked at with the same attention paid to public buildings. The frequency and intensity of use and various communities need to be considered as does:

- using lighting as a design tool and lighting safe zones not just paths;
- providing at least two ways of entering and exiting park spaces;
- using building types which provide opportunities to overlook other spaces, and as such encourage casual surveillance, or "eyes in the park"; and
- provision of many more staffed facilities within parks.

All the proposals for the three sites could be modelled, exhibited, critiqued, and improved. The final stage would be to implement the designs in a park or other open space.

Questions and Comments from the Floor

During the question and answer period, ten members of the audience ("participants") had the opportunity to address their remarks and questions to panellists. Following is a summary of the questions and comments from the floor and the responses given by the panellists.

Participant 1 questioned Jennifer Khong about the number of different parks that survey respondents used on a regular basis.

Jennifer Khong replied that 48 different parks across Metro were named, which was an interesting result, as the questionnaires were only distributed in downtown Toronto.

Participant 2 was one of the women at a community centre approached by Jennifer Khong during the survey process. She noted that a public telephone was put in immediately in Grange Park as a result of the recommendations coming out of Khong's findings. The Parks and Recreation Department said they would put 2 phones in 2 parks on

a trial basis for one year. The participant stressed the effectiveness of collaboration as a way to get things done.

Participant 3 asked Jo-Anne Egan and Jennifer Khong if they had tried to speak to non-park users during their public consultation processes.

Jo-Anne Egan acknowledged the importance of consulting with non-park users. Jennifer Khong said no attempts had been made, although she heard non-users say parks were not located close by and they do not feel safe when alone in a park.

Participant 4 asked about how disparate user groups can be accommodated in one park. She spoke of a large public housing development where, for safety reasons, various user groups (for example seniors) want to have space specifically designated and set aside for them.

Kim Storey responded by noting that one of the most difficult aspects of park design is how to build an "internal structure" which suggests areas where people might want to go while having "dialogue" between the areas.

Jo-Anne Egan said although it is a difficult situation, it is important to recognize that people set up their own turfs and territories anyway. One approach is to get disparate groups together to see where the conflicts lie. Sometimes the problem is only a perceived threat. Tension was a problem in Allan Gardens. A common "scrawl" (board and pens) was set up for users to record their concerns before the designs for the park were redrawn. It became clear that disparate groups did have common concerns but were afraid to talk to each other. The "scrawl" also became a means for users to communicate with park staff. For instance, one woman asked that a fountain be cleaned out as it was her water supply. The park superintendent cleaned it.

Participant 5 expressed a concern about children riding bikes in parks and the danger for other park users that resulted.

Participant 6 explained that constituents in City of Toronto wards often want better lighting and increased activities in parks. These preferences are opposed to those who want parks to revert back to natural landscapes.

Jo-Anne Egan noted that the "natural experience versus the recreational experience" is a classic conflict, in parks. The passive recreational experience is often ignored in these debates. Often in wanting more activities, communities ask for "hard" facilities such as tennis courts and pools. She suggested assessing where the demand for hard facilities is coming from and whether the demand could be met elsewhere. Hard services need to

be carefully placed: they restrict the way parks can be used throughout the year. More understanding of passive recreational activities in parks is needed.

Participant 7—The problems inside Arcadia Co-op are interrelated with neighbourhood and park problems. Turfs are a big issue and affect who feels safe or threatened. A year ago this speaker was approached about whether she would mind having a skating rink in the park across from her apartment building. At the time she objected, but now would agree, as it is important to create opportunities for teens to be doing good things.

Participant 8—What research has been done on rapists' views? What do they think are safe or unsafe urban spaces?

Carolyn Whitzman (Facilitator, Safe City Committee) responded that a book called ***Urban Danger*** by Sally Merry had found that victimizers had a clear concept of social factors as well as design determinants. For example, someone known to regularly carry cash would be approached before someone who knew Tai-Chi. Older women were seen as worthwhile to approach.

Participant 9 remarked that community centre parking lots (and other lots) are very dark, in contrast to the community centres themselves. Telephone booths in parks are important, as is the cooperation between community workers and Parks and Recreation staff to get things done.

Participant 10- What consideration is given to designing children's play equipment? Much of the play equipment in parks, especially climbers, are not designed for children's safety. A child who falls off, falls into pebbles.

Kim Storey replied that park design is done **to** people, without proper consultation. Aesthetics seem to take priority. In Grange Park, for example, the play area was built in an area without shade. Complete integration with the desires of users is the key to how well a park is used. If everyone is using a park, the park is safe. More attention needs to be paid to design for children in parks and daycares.

2

Keynote Address

Robert Millward, Commissioner, City of Toronto Planning and Development Department introduced Diana Chapin, the keynote speaker.

Diana Chapin has held the position of Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Capital Projects, New York City Parks and Recreation Department since 1986. Formerly she worked as Assistant Professor at Queen's College, District Administrator, 8th Congregational District, and Queen's Borough Commissioner.

Diana Chapin Park Planning in New York City

> *"There is no one simple solution to the problem of park safety and security. But there is one goal you must always have clearly before you: create, increase, and sustain positive use."*

Diana Chapin structured her comments around four issues which she argued are key in reaching the goal of creating, increasing, and sustaining positive park use. They were: (1) effective design; (2) citizen and private sector involvement; (3) programming and maintenance; and (4) enforcement. Chapin explained some of the strategies which characterize this approach to park planning and then outlined what strategies were successful in two of the most famous of New York City parks, Union Square and Central Park.

For Chapin, park design is effective when citizens feel comfortable in and attracted to parks. People feel comfortable when they can easily find their way around, quickly spot potential dangers, and move about freely. On the other hand, dark spaces, enclosed spaces, spaces you cannot see in or out of, uncertainty about where a path leads, feelings of isolation or disorientation, and signs of anti-social behaviour all contribute to people feeling that parks are dangerous. Citing the example of Union Square, Chapin noted that good design is "vandal and graffiti proof"; supports real estate values and pays for itself by generating higher taxes; and can alter public perceptions and the way

the park is used. In other words, a secluded paved space, which is redeveloped into a space that is highly visible and accessible from the street, will mitigate against drug deals.

Changes in park design at Union Square included: replacing non-functional sunken pits with more open and grassy areas where height changes are gradual; relating cross walks and paths through the park to street entry points; and increasing sight lines. The park has turned around in terms of utilization. Union Square, once inhabited by drug dealers, now attracts a significant lunchtime crowd and users to the play area. The redevelopment has contributed to a threefold jump in rents for new units built facing the park.

Citizen involvement is seen as critical from the outset of any park improvement project. The Parks and Recreation Department has ongoing relations with community boards. These boards are involved in negotiating priorities for park renovation in both the preliminary and final design process. These boards, however, are limited in their ability to reach out to the larger community. Private sector initiatives such as food stands and farmer's markets can successfully increase and sustain park use.

The "Park Ranger" program in New York City has led to physical improvements in parks as well as changing patterns of park use. The rangers greet and provide information to park users and tourists and run educational programs in schools and parks. They encourage appropriate conduct in parks by making people aware of what the rules are and why they need to be respected. By enforcing certain standards of conduct, positive park use is encouraged and a sense of security is fostered.

The rangers patrol the parks in pairs when not facilitating other programs. They rely on "walkie talkies" or car radios to report crimes and accidents to the authorities. They have no legal power to arrest people and they carry no weapons. Rangers are not permitted to be involved in dangerous situations. Their patrolling ends at 5 p.m.

In addition to the ranger program and a junior ranger naturalist program, other positive activity is taken place in parks through the alternative sentencing program for youth crimes. This program has resulted in 42,000 public service hours being put into parks.

The limitations of rangers as a security force and the low priority police assign to patrolling parks led to the creation of the Park Enforcement Program (PEP). The uniformed officers of this special patrol now work 24 hours a day. Their visibility in parks is meant to deter improper park use. The officers have the power to summons and to arrest, and like the rangers have an important role to play in reporting crime and accidents to the police.

The Citizens Task Force on use and security in Central Park focused on the need for good active use as the key to ensuring a successful and safe park. The recommendations from the task force included: clearing pathways to allow for proper surveillance; establishing a restaurant and encouraging vendors to locate in the park; developing more activity areas; developing camping and job programs for children and youth; making greater use of portable facilities; installing maps, better signage, and direct telephone lines to the police; and providing shuttle bus service into, through, and out of the park. The "road runner program" which encourages joggers to use police call boxes to report any undesirable activity was also recommended. After the recommendations were implemented, more people over 35 years of age and more single people were found to be using the park.

Chapin concluded by noting that the bottom line is money and spending priorities. Citizen involvement is strongly tied to the process of prioritizing. In Toronto, the most important thing individuals and groups can do to improve park use is to "adopt" their local park and build a Toronto-wide network for the rebuilding, programming, and safe use of parks.

The four-phased approach to creating, increasing, and sustaining positive park use which Chapin described is noteworthy for its comprehensiveness. This approach to park planning effectively addresses concerns women have been expressing about parks and open public space in Toronto. In discussing (1) effective design, (2) citizen and private sector involvement, (3) programming and maintenance, and (4) enforcement, Chapin continually reinforced the goal of generating good active park use as a means of making parks more inviting, both in perception and in reality. In addition to trying to achieve good active park use, park rehabilitation projects need to ensure that opportunities for casual surveillance and reporting as well as appropriate police or other response go hand-in-hand with design considerations.

Questions and Comments from the Floor

Three members of the audience ("participants") directed comments and questions to Chapin.

Participant 1- Homeless people are often seen as a source of discomfort and disorder in parks. It is important, however, to be sensitive to this major group of park users, and not to "design" them away.

Chapin agreed and noted that a wide range of people fall within the homeless category,

including some who dress up and go to work each day and return to the park each night. [In her address, Chapin noted that the Park Enforcement Program facilitates cooperation between diverse groups of park users, including homeless people, to allow for continued coexistence].

Participant 2- With respect to public consultation around park design, the wide expansive stairs (viewed in a slide of the redeveloped Union Square) did not seem to reflect the needs of differently-abled persons. Also, if rents went up in the buildings facing the redeveloped park, people can no longer afford to live there.

Chapin clarified her point about park redevelopment increasing real estate values. She noted that new housing went up and the incentive for building at those sites was linked to the higher real estate values. Rents for existing dwellings did not rise. Access for disabled persons is incorporated into every redevelopment project in New York City parks.

Participant 3- What positive activities are teens becoming involved in (in parks)?

Chapin responded with reference to the activities which came about due to the alternative sentencing program, whereby young offenders can undertake community service work instead of serving time in jail. Through this program walls covered with graffiti were repainted and other types of physical rehabilitation occurred. Some teens worked in the facilities and recreation centres, or were involved in programs for children or seniors.

3

Case Studies of Two Large Urban Parks

Bonnie Lindsay, Commissioner, East York Parks and Recreation Department introduced and moderated the presentations of case studies.

The speakers:

Jerry Belan is an Environmental/Park Planner and Landscape Architect who has been retained by the City of Toronto's Parks and Recreation Department to assist with the High Park planning study. The study will set out recommendations concerning the Park's facilities, natural and cultural features, recreational opportunities, and operations and maintenance.

Rita R. Dandavino is an Architect and Urban Planner with the City of Montreal's Service de l'habitation et du developpement urbain (Housing and Urban Development Department). As a member of a multi-disciplinary task force responsible for the elaboration of the Preliminary Plan for the Enhancement of Mount Royal, she is in charge of the City of Montreal's presentation to the public and follow-up of the Plan.

Jerry Belan High Park Toronto

> *"High Park may seem to be functioning successfully, however ... on site investigations indicate the park to be confusing, uncomfortable and hence [it] seems unsafe for many users."*

High Park is a natural environment oasis in the midst of the City of Toronto. It's approximately 400 acres contain a wide variety of natural landscapes including Toronto's largest pond, wetlands, ravine bottomlands and wooded slopes and rolling upland plateaus. The park offers a wide range of year-round facility based outdoor recreation opportunities as well as attractions such as a zoo, historic house, elaborate horticultural displays and miles of nature trails. A 1987 use survey determined that during the day, the men to women

user ratio is 2:1 and at night this ratio is 3:1. According to police records, High Park is considered a relatively safe place. However, the fact that women do not equally participate in using the park perhaps indicates a perception of danger that results in a reluctance to use the park.

In response to the mandate set forth for the City of Toronto in the report *The Safe City: Municipal Strategies for Preventing Public Violence Against Women,* the Parks and Recreation Department has developed safety-related recommendations for High Park. This work, aimed at attempting to reduce opportunities for public violence against women, was undertaken in cooperation with METRAC, Women Plan Toronto, the Safe City Committee, and the 11th Division of the Metro Police Force. The recommendations focus on site design, site amenities, programming and operational improvements to High Park but may have wider application to other public open spaces.

Jerry Belan outlined some of the particular issues and recommended improvements which came out of the *High Park User Survey* (Parks and Recreation Department 1987) and *Planning for Sexual Assault Prevention-Women's Safety in High Park* (METRAC, 1989). Following are some highlights from his presentation on improving safety and security in the park.

In general, there are several park-wide initiatives that if implemented should contribute to the lessening of the perception of danger in the park.

Generally throughout the park, the greater the number of users the greater the feeling of "safety in numbers." More strategically located benches are recommended not only to provide greater comfort for park users but also to promote increased casual surveillance and monitoring of the park by users. As opportunities for casual surveillance increase, the feelings of isolation and fear should be reduced. This is particularly so in the park's natural wooded ravines. A challenge exists to encourage more use of these natural areas. Positive initiatives in lessening the feelings of isolation in natural areas would include strategically located benches and signage. Appropriately located signage should assist a user in feeling less confused about where they are going on any particular trail and where they are in relation to other park facilities and activities. Elsewhere in the park, a signage plan with information depending and directional signs located through the park would be of benefit. A park-wide signage plan would include strategically located maps with some or all of the following information depending on location: a map of the entire park indicating facilities and attractions; roads and paths; listings of events, their location and times; approximate walking times between areas; and promotion of facilities with predictable hours and staff. Signs for nature trails would inform the user of an emergency. Increased information and directional signage is recommended in particular for the following recrea-

tional trails in the park that lead users through isolated and potential entrapment areas (e.g. Grenadier Pond's south-east shoreline; Deer Pen Road; and through the bottom of Spring Creek Ravine). Limited thinning out of vegetation along nature trails may be required in select areas to increase visibility and sightlines.

Facilities, activities and events should be located through the park where appropriate, to distribute park users, thus encouraging casual surveillance of a great percent of the park. On a more site-specific scale, playgrounds and washrooms should be located close to one another with clear sightlines between the two facilities. Locating washrooms in facilities where other predictable activities take place (such as the High Park Chess Club along Bloor Street) would also be advantageous. Appropriate activities and any support facilities aimed at increasing the number of users in certain areas should be encouraged. As well, relocating certain facilities, such as the Vita Parcours trail and exercise stations out of the wooded valley and into a more visible part of the park is recommended.

Safety is also greatly influenced by the presence of regular patrols of the park by the police force using all means available such as car, horse-back and on foot. Even maintenance has an effect on safety. A well cared for park, like High Park, indicates that park management cares for the park. In turn, this caring can foster similar feelings amongst park users towards the park.

The METRAC report recommended that an increase of telephones, strategically located in the park should help alleviate one's feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Further, the report recommends that lighting should be improved where night time use is to be encouraged. Adequate and evenly distributed lighting is recommended for all major access points into the park, roads, parking lots, recreation facilities, public buildings (especially washrooms) and telephone booths. It is important to note that lighting for pedestrian walks should be provided to a pedestrian standard and not to a vehicular standard.

Rita Rachelle Dandavino Mount Royal Park, Montreal

> *"The issue is to reconcile the need to feel secure and oriented with the preservation of this exceptional and charming forested area in the centre of the city."*

Before turning to women's safety issues, Rita R. Dandavino made some general remarks about Mount Royal and the planning process she is involved in. Mount Royal Park spans

over 450 acres on the slopes of Mount Royal, within walking distance of downtown Montreal. Males far outnumber females in terms of park users after dark and in natural areas. The Preliminary Plan for the Enhancement of Mount Royal was made public in the Spring of 1990. It calls for the fulfilment of objectives in the following areas: (1) conservation of natural and cultural resources; (2) education; (3) recreation and (4) tourism; as well as improved accessibility and the development of internal circulation networks. The Plan does not address women's safety, except for one reference to "general accessibility and security".

Dandavino noted that during the consultation process, only two out of eighty participants expressed mainly security-related concerns. They were representatives of a women's group and the Montreal Urban Community Police. The women argued that the statistics being used to demonstrate that Mount Royal Park is safe need to be carefully interpreted, as rape, sexual harassment, and assaults are often not reported to the police. Dandavino reported that women concentrate their park activities along one of the main bicycle and pedestrian pathways (Olmsted Road), and at Beaver Lake (grassy slopes for general recreational use) during the day. In the evenings, women usually use the park only if accompanied by a man. At night women made no use of the park. Forested areas and even Olmsted Road were felt by many women to be potentially unsafe.

To follow-up on concerns raised during public consultations and to prepare for her presentation at this forum, Dandavino organized two walkabouts in the park in cooperation with members of the "Femmes et Ville" (Women and the City) committee, an interdepartmental committee coordinated by the Service de l'habitation et du developpement urbain. METRAC's safety audit format was used as a guideline. One walkabout took place during the day, and the other at night, between 9 and 11:30 pm. Professional and clerical staff from the City of Montreal took part in the exercise, but were in separate walkabouts. Dandavino expects that a detailed analysis of the results of these and other walkabouts (with a greater diversity of women participating) will result in recommendations which can be incorporated into the final Mount Royal Plan or will serve as guidelines for the more detailed planning of the park in the future.

The following are observations gathered during the walkabout:

- During the day, a lack of orientation and panoramic views in the park contribute to feelings of isolation and insecurity.
- At night, the lack of orientation and the complete darkness contribute to feelings of danger and anxiety.
- During the day, the vegetation makes the lighting a mix of shadow and light.

- At night, only indirect lighting from nearby institutional properties is available. The nature trails are especially dark.
- Daytime sightlines are interrupted due to winding footpaths in hilly and forested areas.

The walkabout participants also considered potential assault areas; isolation as it relates to sight and sound; offender escape routes; land use of adjacent areas; movement predictors (configurations through which the direction of movement can be predicted); signage and information; general conceptualization of the park; ways to humanize the area; maintenance; and park staff policies.

Recommendations for improving park security stemming from the public consultation and two "walkabouts" (safety audits) done by women focused on surveillance; circulation of vehicles and pedestrians; preventative measures (lighting, communications networks, public awareness); services and administrative functions.

Dandavino identified two types of barriers which could stand in the way of safety-related recommendations being implemented. First, a strong case is required as to **why** intervention focused on women's safety is needed in order to create the political and administrative will to make things happen. Second, questions about **how** to make the needed changes, in light of pressure from "the preservation lobby", need to be resolved. The work of breaking down the barriers has already begun in Montreal through walkabouts and the Femmes et Ville committee from its position within the administration.

Questions and Comments from the Floor

Participant 1- Has the City of Toronto ever thought about taking over operation of the trackless train in High Park? More stops could be added. It would encourage people to explore the park more.

Jerry Belan replied that once questions around future traffic circulation in the park have been resolved, train options will be considered further. Some consideration has already been given to the idea. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction expressed by the public about the present trackless train during the High Park Planning Study's Public Participation, Phase 1.

Participant 2-What consideration has been given to children (for example in terms of signage and security figures), homelessness (and the need to clean areas where homeless people stay) and the natural environment? This question was generally directed at speakers and forum participants. Time constraints, however, did not permit a response.

4

Workshops

Following the presentations by panellists and speakers, four one hour workshops were held to promote networking and an exchange of ideas between community people and planning and design professionals. The workshops were structured to allow for discussion around several key themes in park planning and safety and to generate action ideas and priorities for the City of Toronto in furthering its work on safety policies and programs. Through the workshops, many participants showed their support for ideas presented by panellists and speakers earlier in the day. The recommendations which conclude this report are based on the ideas heard during the workshops. The themes discussed in the workshops were: citizen participation, wilderness areas, "eyes in the park", and perspectives of new Canadians on park safety. Each workshop was facilitated by an architect or landscape architect and a planner or a community activist and had resource people on hand.

Workshop A

Citizen Participation: How Communities Can Make Their Parks Safer

Facilitators:

Paula Bowley, Architect, Anne Sinclair Architects

Bill Granger, Director, Urban Design, City of North York Planning Department

Richard Milgrom, Architect, Quadrangle Architects

Contributors:

Susan Addario, Personal Safety Officer, University of Toronto

Ellen Leibman, Chair, Feminist Awareness, Issues & Rights (FAIR) Committee, Society of Graduate Students, University of Western Ontario

David Orsini, Student, School of Landscape Architecture, University of Guelph

Chris Phibbs, Programme Co-ordinator, 519 Church Community Centre

This workshop was more of a panel discussion than a participatory workshop, due to the number of workshop participants (over 60), the space it was held in, and the time constraints. The facilitators and contributors outlined their own thoughts about citizen participation. For the people sitting in on the workshop, not as much discussion took place between professionals and non-professionals as was hoped for. Nevertheless, the following ideas and priorities for action came out of the workshop:

- Involve all affected groups in decision-making processes;
- Make effective use of community service boards (e.g. Boards of Park Management);
- Make safety audit methods and materials widely accessible and available;
- Build up networks of park users which can effectively seek community involvement;
- Obtain accurate information about parks and safety concerns;
- Encourage citizens to take more personal responsibility in addressing security concerns;
- Go out into the community to consult directly with park users and those affected by park redevelopment. For example, set up a "storefront operation" in a park to consult with the people affected by plans for that park;
- Make intervener funding available (money to help support the work of community groups, for example, who want to make their perspective about a particular issue known);
- Provide training about safety concerns and how to respond to them for parks personnel; and
- Remain persistent in pursuing goals around safety in parks and open public space.

Workshop B

Wilderness Areas: Balancing "Positive" and "Negative" Isolation

Facilitators:

Ruth Cawker, Architect

David McCluskey, Environmental Planner, City of Toronto Planning and Development Department

Contributor:

Kristina Guiget, Founding Member, TurnAround Parks Project

The discussion in this workshop focused on the definition of "wilderness area". Included in the definition was: an absence of artificially-created facilities and artificial light; a place for fauna and wildlife; and minimal management of the area. A wilderness area can exist within a larger park. The benefits of wilderness areas relate to ecological preservation of unique natural features; opportunities for "social refuge"; alternatives to over-development; and historical value.

The issues which were raised about wilderness areas include:

- Competing views about the functions and uses of such areas (e.g. should these areas be open for recreational uses and if so which ones?);
- Rising land costs which increase the pressure on municipal authorities to develop the land;
- (In)adequacy of the policy for designating 5 percent of land as open public space. (Perhaps a higher percentage of land should be designated for open space if wilderness areas are to be increasingly preserved, or perhaps the policy should more explicitly deal with wilderness areas);
- Fragmentation amongst naturalist groups. (The diversity and issues which characterize naturalist groups make it difficult to elicit coordinated responses to pressing problems.)
- Public lack of confidence in the planning process;
- Failure of "greenbelt " megaplans in urban areas as a means of ensuring the preservation of open space and natural areas; and
- Difficulty in defining who are the users of wilderness areas and involving them in the debate on the nature of parks.

Some action ideas were agreed upon:

- Allocate funding to designate and protect special natural features and wilderness areas in parks;
- Incorporate into designs for wilderness areas aspects which will enhance accessibility and security (e.g. signage); and
- Provide programming that addresses community concerns around education and security issues.

Workshop C

"Eyes in the Park": Planning for Intensive Park Use

Facilitators:

Susan McTavish, Senior Designer, Moorhead, Fleming, Corban and Partners, Landscape Architects

Brian Milne, Urban Designer and Planner, City of Toronto Planning and Development Department

Contributors:

Leo deSorcy, Urban Designer, City of Toronto Planning and Development Department

Christine Sharman, Co-ordinator, Central District Area, City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department

Karey Shinn, President, Kew Beach Residents Association

Candace Zboch, Parks Planner, City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department

The phrase "Eyes in the Park" refers to the need for more casual surveillance of parks by users and neighbourhood residents as a means for making parks safer. Design considerations and creating opportunities for more intensive park use are key elements in ensuring casual surveillance occurs within parks. The workshop considered some of the challenges which exist for landscape architects and parks professionals in designing for safe environments without adopting strict design criteria and losing sight of the notion that each park must be considered individually. Community input about the needs of specific parks was valued as a tool for improving park safety.

The following ideas and priorities for action came out of the "Eyes in the Park" workshop:

- Promote community-based control in park design and decision-making processes, e.g. through a "Board of Park Management", as provided for in the Province of Ontario's Public Parks Act (1985).
- Adopt a "holistic" approach when considering the best relationship between public and private space; break down barriers between streets and parks.
- Learn when to lock the gate when parks cannot be made safe. In other words, parks should not be open to the public when and if serious security risks exist.

- Acknowledge that actions to improve access for disabled persons means access for all park users will be improved.
- Establish a "citizen watch" program for parks.
- Introduce a system of "Park Rangers".
- Ensure that park safety remains on the public agenda; political leadership is needed to bring about changes in park policy.

One approach to design is to encourage "good edges" to parks and open space. "Party walls" or other forms of partitions and garbage facilities, for example, which obstruct sightlines can be avoided. Windows and at-grade park uses will help to keep "eyes on the park". Another option is to increase the scale of development in areas adjacent to parks which in turn will increase the number of potential users.

Workshop D

Park Needs and Park Safety: The Perspective of New Canadians

Facilitators:

Deena Ladd, Coordinator, Women Plan Toronto

Raji Shukla, Architect, Design Services Department, Toronto Board of Education

Community policing and the lack of representation at all levels of decision-making (e.g. in the Police Force and the Parks and Recreation Department) were two of the main issues discussed in the workshop.

The following ideas and priorities resulted from the discussion:

- Develop a "Friends of the Park" program (park attendants/staff persons). They would be known to the community, and easily identifiable by park users by their friendly uniforms (e.g. T-shirts). Some ethnic communities do not see uniformed police officers or other security forces in parks as a positive presence, as a result of their experiences in other countries and poor race relations experienced with the Metro Toronto Police Force.
- Promote educational material (e.g. outdoor education and tours). The material should be available in schools, community centres, and ethnic media. It would help to welcome newcomers to the community to the parks.

- Make effective communication a priority. To increase accessibility, use graphics and different languages to communicate the necessary information.
- Ensure that affirmative action policies are effective and followed in hiring practises and in making appointments to boards and commissions, in order to ensure that parks decision-makers reflect the population they serve.
- Promote cultural exchange and positive education (e.g. through fairs, programs and activities in the parks).
- Make use of local TV, local media, community centres, ethnic media to promote parks and what they have to offer.
- Require anti-racist education for police officers.

With only eight participants, this workshop was poorly attended in comparison with the other workshops which had thirty or more participants. Four of the participants in Workshop D were people of colour. The attendance at this workshop demonstrates to what extent many white professionals and community people are reluctant to make multicultural issues a priority in their work. Although women's safety concerns in parks have made it to the public agenda, the same degree of concern about and interest in the experiences of non-white park users, non-English-speaking users, and newcomers to the city has not yet been demonstrated.

5

Closing Remarks

On behalf of City of Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton, Betty Disero, City Councillor for Ward 12, made the closing remarks.

Betty Disero was elected to Toronto City Council in 1985. She is a member of several committees, including: City Services Committee, Neighbourhoods Committee, and Toronto Economic Development Committee.

> "Individuals—and communities—need to feel that they can do something about crime and fear of crime, regardless of their gender, their income, their race, their sexual preference, or their first language."

Betty Disero began her remarks by referring to the Safe City Report which was adopted by Toronto City Council in 1988, and the initiatives over the past two years which are a direct result of that report. A committee was formed of politicians and representatives of community groups to implement the recommendations from the report. As a result of the implementation of some recommendations, the Parks and Recreation Department is now offering free self defence courses for women, and safety guidelines for underground residential parking garages have been extended to all underground garages. This forum was organized in response to the recommendation that the City review its policy on landscaping and open space with consideration for women's safety.

Disero remarked on the wide-spread interest in exploring how architects, designers, politicians, planners, and members of the community can cooperate to "help create the conditions that will lessen fear, lessen crime, and improve the quality of our parks and open spaces". This interest is demonstrated by attendance at the forum. Participants came from every municipality in Metro and from Guelph, Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Kanata, Montreal, Burlington and New York City. Both the public and private sectors demonstrated their interest in and concern about women's safety in urban parks and the diverse strategies which could be used to address the concerns.

In her brief summary of the action ideas which came out of the workshops, Disero emphasized the need for community involvement. She stressed the importance of making sure that the ideas which stem from the forum are not lost.

6

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

A significant number of ideas for future consideration and action arose during the presentations by panellists and speakers, question periods, workshops, and participants' evaluation of the forum. These ideas have been synthesized and are presented in the form of recommendations intended to be considered by the City of Toronto in the development of park policy for the next one to four years. They indicate the need for more detailed investigations into all aspects of making parks safer places for everyone who lives or works in the City. The recommendations can also serve as a model for other Parks Departments in Metro and beyond.

Clearly, the most pressing community concerns expressed by speakers, panellists, and participants at the forum relate to community involvement in park design and management decision-making. The priority in implementing recommendations must be given to investigating and trying out various approaches for encouraging community involvement in park planning and redevelopment processes. Obtaining input in a creative way from the diverse groups of park users will be a key factor in a successful strategy to create safer parks for women.

Many of the ideas which emerged as recommendations are similar to the recommendations in METRAC's report *Planning for Sexual Assault Prevention, Women's Safety in High Park*, written by Ali Grant(1989). Similarities lie in the recommendations concerning:

(1) greater community involvement (especially input from women) in planning for redevelopment;

(2) training for park staff to enable them to understand and respond to women's safety concerns and survivors of sexual assault;

(3) increasing opportunities for casual surveillance;

(4) developing a range of educational materials;

(5) improving signage; and

(6) expanding programming.

The Parks and Recreation Department has undertaken to address some of METRAC's recommendations in the High Park Master Plan. The recommendations from the forum suggest that wide-spread support exists for a re-evaluation of park policies from the perspective of women's safety and how safety concerns are related to the operation of parks.

Despite the forum's focus on women's security issues, the nature of many recommendations signals growing support for future consideration of the specific safety concerns of other groups of park users, including lesbians and gays, disabled persons, people of colour, seniors, children, and teenagers.

The following 19 recommendations are offered in the context of furthering the work already taking place within the City of Toronto to help prevent public violence against women. The City of Toronto through its Safe City initiatives, and in particular the Departments of Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development are recognized leaders in Canada for their attempts to formulate and implement municipal strategies aimed at preventing public violence and making Toronto a healthier and more liveable city. By continuing to be a leader in exploring and implementing these strategies, the City of Toronto not only fulfils its responsibility to its population, but also has a commendable role to play both provincially and nationally.

Recommendations

The four policy areas in the keynote address presented by Diana Chapin to discuss park planning and management in New York City provide a useful framework for presenting these recommendations. The recommendations are therefore grouped as follows: effective design, community involvement, programming and maintenance, and enforcement and park management.

A. Effective Design

1) That new opportunities for information-sharing about incorporating women's safety concerns into design processes be organized. Another **forum** or a **lecture series** which focus on integrating safety concerns into all aspects of open space design would benefit design professionals while promoting community participation. These

events could be organized by Metro and City of Toronto Planning Departments and City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department, in cooperation with professional associations for planners, architects, and landscape architects. A **design competition** sponsored by the Department of Parks and Recreation could be held to involve design, architecture and landscape architecture students in generating proposals for several sites. The competition would be a cost-effective way to test out new ideas about park design and safety.

2) That research be undertaken on:

- how, where, and why women feel unsafe;
- how women perceive different park environments; and
- how women use parks and their reasons for not using parks.

This research, which the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department is best suited to undertake, is background information needed to achieve effective and sensitive park design.

3) That user needs assessments and post-occupancy evaluations be undertaken as regular parts of the planning schedule for all park improvements and the related planning approval process. User needs assessments would ensure that users and the complexity of their activities, needs, and interactions would be studied before (re)development plans for a particular site are approved. A commitment to evaluating the successes or shortcomings of new or redeveloped parks, (e.g. after five years) would send a signal to the community that design and redevelopment are ongoing processes. The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department should build user needs assessments and post-occupancy evaluations into their planning procedures for park (re)development as soon as possible.

4) That policy and/or guidelines on signage in parks be adopted by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department which:

- presents information through graphics (international symbols);
- is multi-lingual (when symbols cannot convey the required information); and
- informs the public about the nature, location, and size of wilderness areas.

For example, park signs should indicate whether a jogging or bike trail passes along well-travelled routes or goes through a wilderness area. Included in park signage should be: (1) maps of the entire park showing facilities and services with predictable hours;

and (2) a listing of events with their times and locations.

5) That guidelines for making parks accessible for disabled persons, seniors, and children be developed through consultation with the public and representatives of relevant community groups and related City of Toronto task forces and committees (e.g. Mayor's Committee on Aging, etc). These guidelines would consider not only the design of facilities and park amenities, but also signage, access, and programming. The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department should take responsibility for coordinating the development of these guidelines and the consultation process.

6) That guidelines be developed which encourage "eyes in the park". To maximize casual surveillance of urban parks, these guidelines would consider:

- ensuring sightlines are not obstructed;
- providing for at-grade park uses;
- encouraging development in adjacent areas which would increase the number of potential park users;
- a "Road Runner Program" which encourages joggers and cyclists to become aware of activity in parks and report negative park use
- "Citizen Watch Program" which encourages neighbourhood residents to help in the surveillance of park space and report suspicious activity.

The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department should undertake to develop these guidelines aimed at involving the community in surveillance as well as accident and crime reporting.

B. Community Involvement

The public as well as the private sector have a role to play in making parks and open spaces safer places. This role needs to be acknowledged, supported and nurtured by designers, planners, and landscape architects, as well as municipal governments if the community is to fully participate. Community involvement helps to make and keep park safety an item on the public agenda.

7) That a selected number of case studies be undertaken by the City of Toronto Department of Parks and Recreation to investigate innovative ways to obtain community input into park design processes. Consideration should be given to the following means of obtaining input:

- wide-spread use of safety audits done by women;
- self-directed research on women's everyday experiences undertaken by community groups
- a process known as co-design (having artists work with members of a community to visually represents their aspirations);
- personal contact with park users and communication in languages other than English;
- a "common scrawl" (board and pens in a park) to promote dialogue between conflicting user groups, or users and park authorities.

The successful techniques for reaching out to diverse groups of park users need to be incorporated into the public consultation process which is a condition for planning approval.

8) That the potential for making intervener funding available to concerned community groups be investigated. This funding would be available for groups who are not financially able to research and present their concerns about aspects of park design, programming or security for example. To apply for the funding, groups would be required to submit a proposal which outlines their concerns and how they would undertake research to more fully examine those concerns. The implications and possibility for intervener funding should be jointly considered by the City of Toronto Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation Departments.

9) That financial and other resources be invested into building support for and interest in parks through local and Metro-wide social networks of park users. Social networks are a largely non-hierarchal and unintimidating mechanism for building community interest in and support for parks. They may provide the structure to obtain and maintain on-going community input into park design, operations and management. Networks may be formed to include homeless persons, seniors, parenting women and other groups of park users who would not necessarily have access to community decision-making processes. The Parks and Recreation Department should investigate the potential for networks in consultation with community leaders.

10) That consideration be given to setting up local Boards of Park Management as a means to promote ongoing community involvement in park design and operations.

The Boards of Park Management, as provided for the Province of Ontario's "Public Parks Act" would signal a desire for community-based control of parks. The boards would help

negotiate priorities for park renovation and review preliminary and final designs for the park. These boards would need to make the involvement of women, members of ethnic communities, disabled persons, seniors, and homosexuals a priority. Community leaders and the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department should work together to find ways to build support for community based control of parks.

11) That policy to facilitate private sector initiatives such as food concessions, mobile food carts, cafes, farmer's markets, artisan's markets, and flea markets should be developed and implemented. These initiatives will help to increase and sustain park use, thus making it a safer space for women. The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department in collaboration with the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department and the private sector should develop this policy.

Programming and Maintenance

Programming helps draw more people to the park. Good active park use helps make parks feel safer for women by reducing feelings of isolation and increasing opportunities for casual surveillance of the park by users. High levels of maintenance demonstrate that park staff care for the parks, and in more general terms that the community cares about their parks.

12) That in-park programs aimed at increasing the number of users during under-utilized times of the day (e.g. evenings) be developed by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department on a trial basis. If found to be successful in increasing and sustaining park use, longer term funding should be sought.

13) That the potential for a park ranger program in large parks be investigated by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department. The rangers could promote educational programming in parks as well as in schools. They would promote positive park use, make users aware of park rules and why they need to be respected, facilitate coexistence between disparate groups of users, and report crimes and accidents. In considering a ranger program, it should be recognized that some ethnic communities do not see uniformed police or security officers as a positive presence in parks, due to their experiences in other countries and the perception of poor race-relations practices within the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force. Consideration should be given to how park rangers could be identified by "friendlier uniforms". At present, park staff must call on police officers to enforce park rules. The possibility of making park staff or rangers by-law enforcement officers could also be investigated.

14) That the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department, with assistance from ethnic communities, investigate how cultural exchange and positive education about new Canadians can be promoted in parks through fairs, activities and programming.

These activities can help promote a greater understanding and awareness about new Canadians and in turn help to make parks safer, friendlier, and more accessible to members of diverse ethnic communities.

15) That the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department ensure that racist, homophobic, and sexist graffiti in parks is immediately removed by parks maintenance staff. Graffiti which degrades people of colour, gays or women can increase feelings of insecurity in public spaces.

Enforcement and Park Management

A sense of security in parks can be fostered by enforcing certain standards of conduct on park users.

16) That more in depth anti-racism education for police officers and others involved in enforcing a code of conduct in parks be required. The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force should undertake to develop educational programs aimed at combating racist attitudes amongst staff.

17) That the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department ensure that affirmative action policies are in place and are functioning to promote proper community representation among park staff and appointees to committees, boards and commissions affiliated with the department or under their jurisdiction. Proper community representation at all levels of decision-making will help to ensure that park design and operations are sensitive to diverse user groups.

18) That the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department provide training on how to respond to women's safety concerns to all park staff. This would include training in self-defence and how to respond to survivors of a sexual assaults in parks.

19) That the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation set out a timetable for implementing these recommendations over the next four years. It would be useful for

the Parks and Recreation Department to develop and make public the phasing of safety-related initiatives as a way of responding to and building upon the public support which exists for work in this direction.

In broad terms, only recommendations which involve existing community or City resources can be undertaken in 1991, due to departmental budgets. It is suggested that recommendations requiring research or the preparation of guidelines be grouped together and undertaken in 1992. Depending on the findings, this work would lay the foundation for the other recommendations to be implemented in 1993 and 1994.

City of Toronto Council has demonstrated its commitment to fighting public violence against women by supporting the Safe City initiatives. Council is aware of the urgency in taking whatever action is necessary to make public spaces safer places for women and hence all Torontonians. Clearly the political will exists to make women's safety concerns a priority in redeveloping parks.

Notes

[1] Ontario Women's Directorate, "Fact Sheet on Sexual Assault", May 1988.

[2] City of Toronto, *Safe City Report: Municipal Strategies for Preventing Public Violence Against Women*, Adopted September 1988, p. 1.

[3] Ibid., p. 1

[4] Ibid., p. 13

[5] Community Users Survey was done as part of City Plan '91, the official plan review process of the City of Toronto.

Appendix A

List of Government Agencies, Organizations and Community Groups;

- Canadian Urban Institute
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- City of Montreal Housing and Urban Development Department
  Module de la planification urbaine
  Ville de Montreal
  226 rue St. Jacques
  Montreal, H2Y 1N1
- City of New York Parks and Recreation
  Olmsted Centre
  Flushing Meadows Corona Park
  Flushing New York 11368 USA
- City of North York Planning Department
  5100 Yonge Street
  North York M2N 5V7
- City of Scarborough Parks and Recreation Department
  150 Borough Drive
  Scarborough, M1P 2N7

- City of Toronto Department of Parks and Recreation
  21st floor East Tower
  City Hall
  Toronto, M5H 2N2
- City of Toronto Planning and Development Department
  18th floor East Tower
  City Hall
  Toronto M5H 2N2
- City Plan '91 Office
  City of Toronto
  75 Elizabeth Street
  Toronto
- East York Parks and Recreation Department
  550 Mortimer Avenue
  Borough of East York, M4J 2H2
- Femmes et Ville (Women and the City)
  Ville de Montreal
  276 St. Jacques 5 me
  Montreal, H2Y 1N1
  (514) 872-8204
- 519 Church Community Centre
  519 Church St.
  Toronto, M4Y 2C9
  392-6874
- FRAPPE (Femmes regroupe es pour l'accessibilite au pouvoir politique et economique)
  822 rue Sherbrooke est, bureau 322
  Montreal, H2L 1K4
  (B) (514) 521-0152
- High Park Women's Action Committee
  276 Indian Road
  Toronto, M6R 2X2
  767-0761
- Kew Beach Residents' Association
  142 Wheeler Avenue

Toronto, M4E 3V4

- Metro Action Committee Against Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)
  158 Spadina Rd.
  Toronto M5R 2T8
  392-3135
- Metro Planning Department
  11th floor, East Tower
  City Hall
  Toronto, M5H 2N2
- Safe City Committee
  City of Toronto Planning and Development Department
  City Hall, 18th floor, East Tower
  Toronto, M5H 2N2
  392-0403
- Toronto Board of Education
  155 College Street
  Toronto, M5T 1P6
- Turnabout Parks
  191 Roncesvalles
  Toronto, M6R 2L5
- Women Plan Toronto
  736 Bathurst Street
  Toronto, M5S 2R4
  588-9751

Appendix B

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- Susan Addario [Contributor, Workshop A]
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- Ruth Armitage
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  East: 392-7286
  West: 392-7259
- Jerry Belan [Walkabout Leader; Speaker]
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  (B) 392-7264
- Paula Bowley [Facilitator: Workshop A]
  Anne Sinclair Architects
  16 Croft Street
  Toronto M5S 2N8
  (B) 975-8479
- Ruth Cawker [Facilitator: Workshop B]
  Architect
  489 College Street, Suite 407
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  (B) 921-7187
- Diana Chapin [Keynote Speaker]
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- Leo deSorcy [Contributor: Workshop C]
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  81 Elizabeth Street
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- Betty Disero [Closing Remarks]
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  2nd floor, Council Members' Offices
  City Hall
  Toronto, M5H 2N2
- Jo-Anne Egan [Panellist]
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  City of North York Planning Department
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  (B) 224-6127
- Connie Guberman [Coordinated Walkabout]
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- Kristina Guiget [Contributor: Workshop B]
  Turnabout Parks Project
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- Barbara Hall [Introductory Remarks]
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- Susan Hallat [Walkabout Leader]
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- Deborah Hierlihy [Walkabout Leader; Wrote report on the forum]
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  (B)392-0068
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  City of Toronto Planning and Development Department
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- Deena Ladd [Facilitator, Workshop D]Women Plan Toronto
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- Howard Levine [Moderator, Panel Discussion]
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- Ellen Liebman [Contributor: Workshop A]
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- Bonnie Lindsay [Moderator: Case Studies]
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- Lianne McKenna [Introduced last speaker of the day]
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- Robert Millward [Introduced Keynote Speaker]
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